



The President's Daily Brief

April 29, 1975

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

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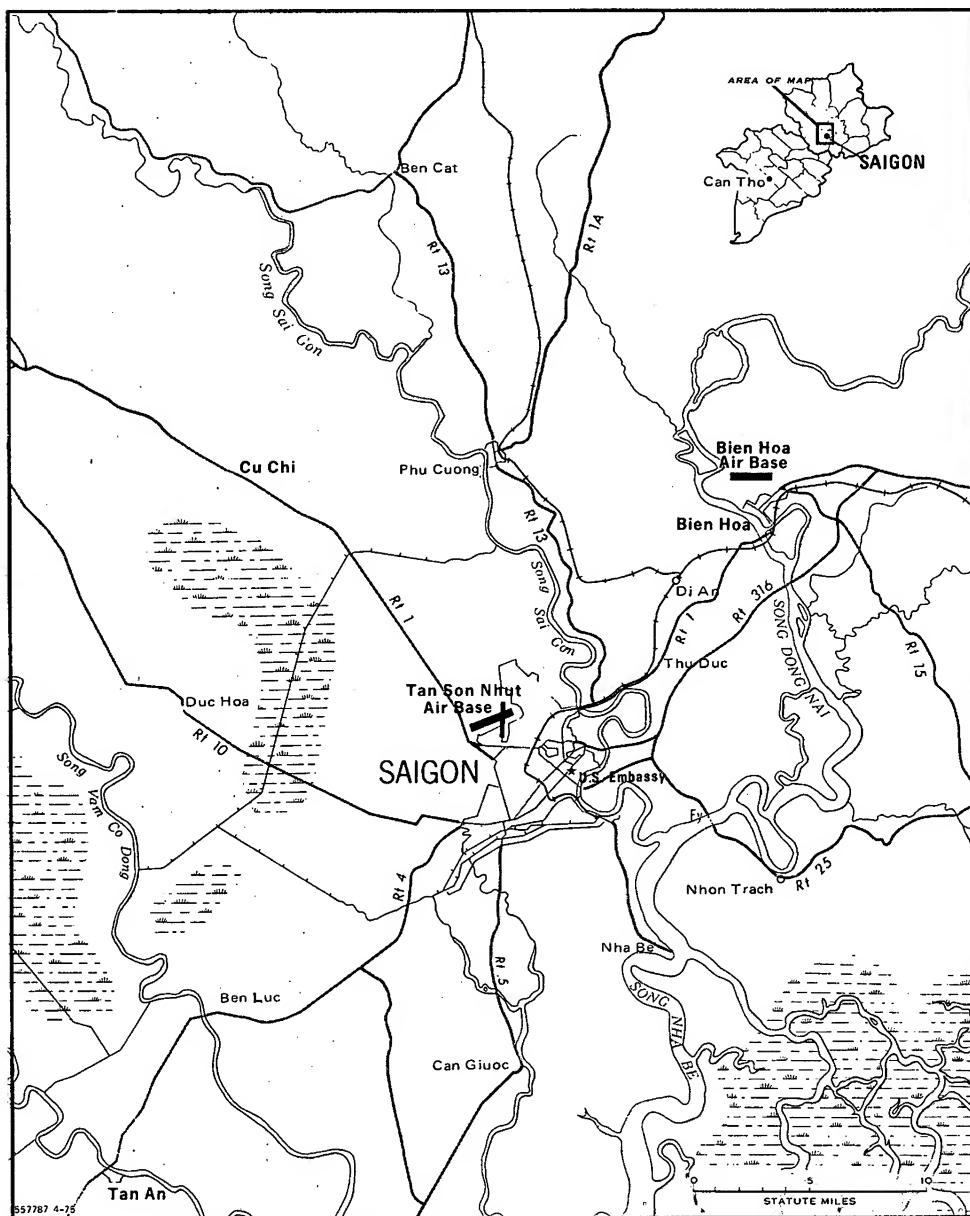
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SOUTH VIETNAM

The US has begun the emergency evacuation of remaining Americans from South Vietnam. The effort encountered some problems initially. The communist assault on Saigon has closed Tan Son Nhut airfield and led to panic and chaos throughout the capital area.

The first US helicopters from a naval task force off the coast landed at Tan Son Nhut with a US marine security force, shortly after 2 a.m. EDT. The US commander of the evacuation operation reported that some Americans in downtown Saigon had been unable to reach an evacuation point, but later reporting indicates a large number of Americans had arrived at the US defense attaché compound.

According to a late report, more than 2,000 people including several hundred Americans now have been safely evacuated.

The evacuation of Americans from Can Tho has encountered resistance from South Vietnamese forces. The US consul general, together with 22 other Americans plus Filipinos and Vietnamese civilians, tried to flee down the Mekong by boat, but they were attacked by South Vietnamese helicopter gunships. Late reports indicate they too have been rescued.

Communist forces began their attack early this morning with massive artillery and rocket bombardments of Tan Son Nhut airfield. Many South Vietnamese aircraft were destroyed on the ground, but others managed to take off despite the rubble and heavy groundfire. Some aircraft participated in the defense of Saigon, while others flew to Can Tho. A number of government aircraft and helicopters flew to US ships off the coast or to bases in Thailand. At least three South Vietnamese aircraft were shot down over Saigon by SA-7 missiles.

The communists followed the Tan Son Nhut assault with a spate of small attacks on the suburbs of the capital. Government units just northwest of Saigon abandoned their positions, and a number of government outposts were lost as the result of ground

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attacks. North Vietnamese sappers also penetrated the southern edge of Saigon and attacked a large military communications site. An intercepted message had indicated that the North Vietnamese 7th Division would try to take over Saigon's radio station, but there are no reports of such an attempt. The radio station is located a short distance from the US embassy.

North Vietnamese forces also launched large-scale attacks west and southwest of Saigon. A large communist force supported by tanks attacked the South Vietnamese 25th Division at Cu Chi, and intercepts suggest the communists hope to push on to the capital. Heavy fighting is occurring along Route 4 southwest of Saigon, and the communist forces attacking in that area could reach Cholon and the outskirts of the capital within hours.

East of Saigon, intercepted messages suggest the North Vietnamese have captured Vung Tau and Bien Hoa and are now pushing west.

The North Vietnamese assault on the capital came on the heels of the communist rejection yesterday of President Minh's call for negotiations. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong media have characterized the new Saigon government as just another "reactionary administration" and reiterated earlier demands that the government's administrative structure "be abolished," its "war machine" dismantled and that the US leave immediately. In a desperate effort to meet some of these demands, the Minh government today requested that all American personnel leave the country within 24 hours and announced plans to overhaul the governmental apparatus and legalize the communist party. In another desperate gesture of reconciliation, Saigon Radio today referred to the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong as "our brothers of the other side."

In his acceptance speech two days ago, President Minh asked for a cease-fire in order to arrange a "political solution within the framework of the Paris Agreement" and called upon the South Vietnamese military to "defend the remaining territory." It now seems clear, however, that Hanoi has rejected the gradual transfer of power and negotiations on a co-equal governmental basis implied by Minh and is determined to accept nothing short of surrender.

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CAMBODIA

Deputy Prime Minister Khieu Samphan announced in a communiqué he read over Phnom Penh radio yesterday that a "special national congress" had "decided" that Prince Sihanouk would remain nominal head of state and that Penn Nouth would be "allowed" to remain as prime minister.

Although the announcement leaves little doubt that Sihanouk and Penn Nouth will be severely circumscribed, Samphan's reference to "thorough review and debate" suggests that the decision to allow the two any role was a bitter pill for some communist leaders to swallow. In this regard, Samphan hinted that other non-communist figures--such as Foreign Minister Sarin Chak--may be on their way out by saying that they would be "rewarded according to their respective contributions and abilities."

In the communiqué, Samphan backtracked on the communists' previously stated willingness to accept "all unconditional aid." He made allusions, instead, to "foreign interferences...under the form of humanitarianism." At the same time, however, he spoke of "striving to develop unity with...people throughout the world," including "peace and justice loving Americans," and again stressed a "nonaligned and neutral" foreign policy.

In addition to the communiqué, Phnom Penh radio over the weekend broadcast its first postwar "editorial." A relatively new art form for Khmer communist propagandists, the editorial was noteworthy for its references to "the great Cambodian revolutionary organization" that achieved victory through its "clear-sighted and correct line." However oblique, this is the first public acknowledgment of the dominant role played by the covert Khmer Communist Party.

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Meanwhile, a recent message from the Khmer Communist Party Central Committee has confirmed communist plans to expel large numbers of non-Cambodians from Phnom Penh. A communist commander in northwestern Cambodia was ordered to send 22 vehicles to the provincial capital of Pursat on April 30 to pick up a large number of "foreigners" and transport them to the town of Poipet on the Thai border. The Central Committee stated that "all foreigners" should be expelled "quickly" because they created "many complex political problems."

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that press reports of a Cambodian communist buildup along the Thai border are exaggerated. Thai officials have expressed anxiety over the proximity of Khmer communist forces to Thailand, but there is no evidence that the communists are massing troops along the border. Khmer communist forces are still attempting to consolidate their control, and alleged border violations probably have involved pursuit of fleeing Cambodians.

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FRANCE-MBFR

The possibility that the US may withdraw nuclear warheads and delivery systems as part of a force reduction agreement has increased France's apprehension about the MBFR negotiations.

The French, who opted not to participate in the Vienna talks, have long expressed concern that the talks could result in an agreement that would inhibit future European defense cooperation ventures and weaken NATO's defensive capabilities.

[redacted] the force reduction talks are now moving into a critical phase and is making a concerted effort to put its skeptical views on record.

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[redacted]
[redacted] the Soviet Union's real purpose in MBFR is to obtain a means to frustrate future European defense cooperation and to influence West European affairs in general. [redacted]

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[redacted] France is concerned about the long-term rather than the short-term effects on the security of Western Europe if the US offered to withdraw military elements.

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In particular, the French fear that:

--Reducing "Allied" air forces would erode NATO's conventional tactical air capabilities and might affect NATO's capability to deploy and use tactical nuclear weapons.

--Accepting a ceiling on US tactical nuclear warheads might prohibit future technological changes that could bolster NATO's strategy of deterrence.

--A cutback in US nuclear delivery systems would have deleterious consequences for the Allies' military flexibility.

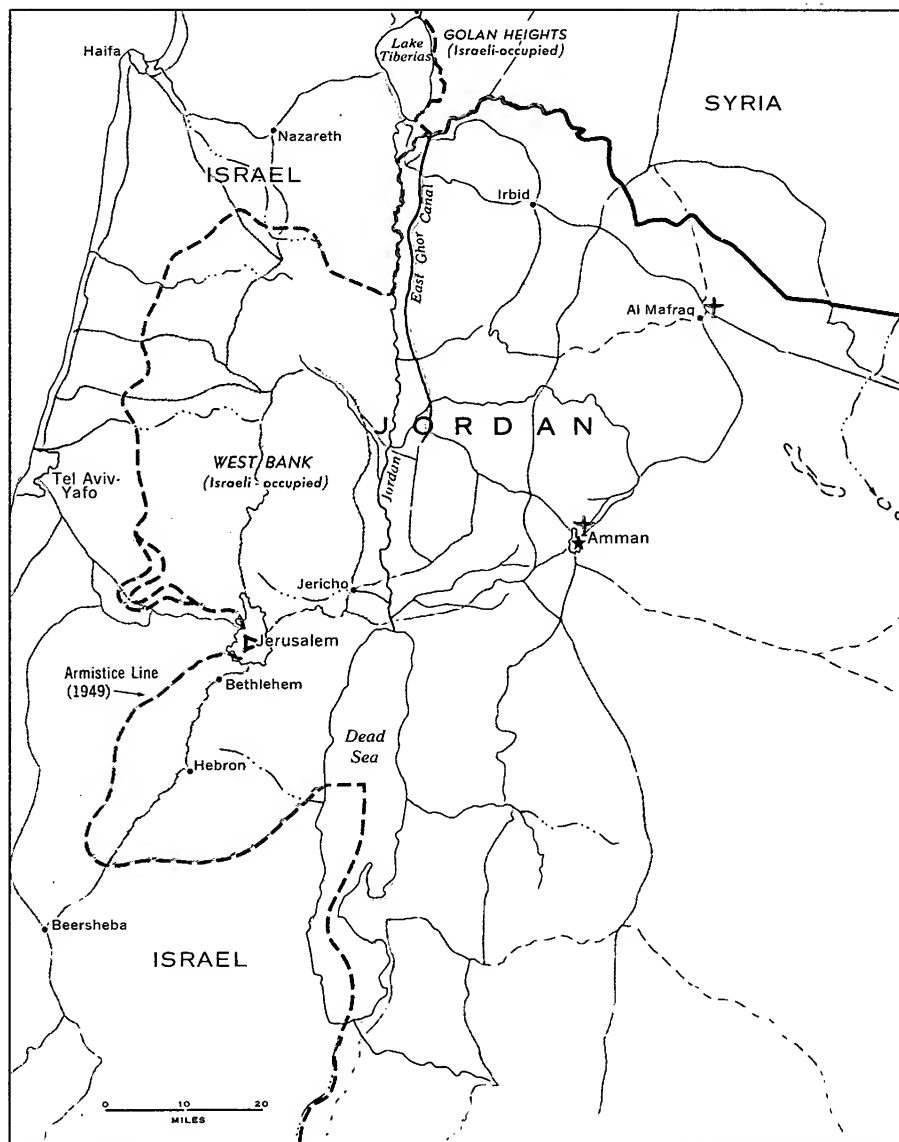
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--A trade-off of US nuclear elements for a Soviet tank army would decrease Western security because the Soviets could easily reintroduce the tanks.

--Verifying any force reduction agreement would be extremely difficult.

The French probably will continue their efforts in other forums to dissuade the US and NATO from proposing the bargain concerning nuclear elements and a tank army. They may have some difficulty, however. Most of the NATO participants in the Vienna talks agree in principle that the so-called nuclear sweetener is the West's only trump card and that it should be played relatively soon in an effort to break the deadlock.



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The initial reaction by NATO members to our demarche requesting early consideration of Spain's relationship with the Alliance has been negative.

Most NATO members, in fact, are decidedly cool to any initiatives at this time to bring Spain closer to membership. Many favor eventual ties with Spain, but believe closer relations with the Franco regime could have serious political consequences in their own countries and weaken public support for the Alliance. Some also argue that premature links with Madrid might cause a popular reaction in Spain against NATO when Franco passes from the scene. French and West German officials show the most positive interest in the problem, while the Belgian government is the most negative.

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